Los Indios Matacos y su Lengua
[The Mataco Indians and their Language]

by
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with an introduction by
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Part I

Preliminary Introduction

114

Before Mr. Juan Pelleschi published his interesting and painstaking book "Ocho Meses en el Gran Chaco" [Eight Months in the Gran Chaco] the language of the Matacos was practically unknown, although it was common knowledge that many tribes spoke it. It is hard to understand how this language could have disappeared so completely without leaving so much as a trace in the archives of the Jesuit Fathers; but the fact is that even at the beginning of the past century Father Machoni himself complained about the loss of grammars and vocabularies of the Tonocoté language, with which language I identify the Mataco-Mataguayo tongue [797] and which was the language used by the Jesuit missionaries to indoctrinate and evangelize these Indians.

In the early part of this century Hervás and Adelung, the former with his "Catálogo de las Lenguas" [Catalogue of Languages] the latter with his "Mithridates," were able to mention only the name of the language, as though to have on record that they were aware of its existence, but they lamented that they had been unable to secure a single fact in regard to it, not even a Pater Noster with which to illustrate their extremely sparse knowledge of this interesting group of languages spoken by countless Indians, (that is to say by Chaco Indians). The fact is that some time later the scholarly French traveler Alcides d'Orbigny, took

[128]

Translator's Note: The Spanish word "cristiano" when used as a noun which literally means "Christian" has been translated throughout as "white man" or "white," since the translator feels that this is really closer to its basic meaning. "Non-Indian" might have been used instead but it seemed cumbersome and did not carry with it the tone of superiority which both "cristiano" in Spanish and "white" in English (however unfortunately) carry.

●114 back to France a short but useful vocabulary of Vejoz, a dialect of the Matacos living near the river Zeta or Oran, but this [560] document remained in obscurity among that author's papers in the National Library of Paris until it was found by Mr. Luciano Adam, who was kind enough to send it to me at Pilciao.

114 Without knowing anything about the language of the Mataco
126 Indians, completely free from prejudice regarding both the Indians and their language, and intent upon finding out what he could at first hand, Mr. Pelleschi traveled into the Chaco in the manner which he so picturesquelly describes, capping his work with a linguistic treatise in which he re-discovered (may I be allowed the expression) the language of the Uicquii, whom we call Matacos and Mataguayos. The author cuts himself free from all preconceived notions as to grammatical rules of the "sum, es, fuit," type and writes down what he hears, not once, but a thousand times, until he discovers the part of speech to which, according to our way of thinking, the word he was treating corresponded, together with its other accidental characteristics. In the very same order in which he came upon them he sets them down in his travel notebook, in such a way that Mr. Pelleschi allows us to take part in his discoveries and we can delight with him in each new find.

000 Unfortunately for us the book was written in Italian. Doctor José Gutiérrez, friend of the author and warmly interested in these matters, had died, and there was therefore lacking one who would take an active interest in the book, which was, nevertheless, a revelation regarding the study of Argentine languages. Thus it was that the book remained of interest only to bibliophiles, among whom was General Mitre, and it is to him that I owe my first introduction to this meritorious and extremely interesting work.

After reading the book I resolved to make the author's acquaintance, since it dawned on me, in half an hour's perusal, that information of this type is not set down without copious notes, and I realized that there was an important drawback to the work, which was the lack of a vocabulary which might serve as background and complement to the Grammatical Essay covering the last few chapters.

It was not hard to find a mutual friend, and in 1889 there began a relationship which has yielded me many hours of real pleasure and satisfaction.

000 It is hardly necessary to say that as soon as the first polite conventional exchanges were over with, we plunged into the matter of our common interest, and that Mr. Pelleschi allowed me to see his portfolios, which I emptied of three quarters of their contents before retiring to my house at Pilciao in Andalgalá de Catamarca [561]. Ensconced there with my assistant and secretary Ramón Martínez, we set to work coordinating and ordering the vocabulary and sentence lists with an eye to publishing the result at some future date, always provided that the owner of the notes would permit such a thing.

Mr. Pelleschi and I used to see each other every so often, and when we were far apart, we would write. I used to urge him to publish something further, and he would promise to do so whenever his many occupations should give him respite. Later on we became involved in the politico-commercial occurrences of the years 1889 to 1893, and could only return to the matter at hand at long intervals. Finally, in April of the latter year, in odd moments, and amid other matters which concerned everything but linguistics, I was able to finish the outline of the work which is here published, with the introduction approximately as it now stands, but with Pelleschi's section lacking that fourth part which I had not yet copied.

All the manuscripts were sent to my friend Mr. Pelleschi and he pointed out the flaws contained in what I sent him.

The crisis of 1890 and the subsequent disturbances at the La Plata Museum had postponed publication of my papers on linguistics in the magazine put out by that institution and therefore all my material was held up, among which was our Mataco manuscript. Pelleschi also was busy with other prior commitments, railroad work, etc. In 1893 Mr. J. B. Ambrosetti, on behalf of the Boletín del Instituto Geográfico [Bulletin of the Geographic Institute], offered us space in that worthy magazine, and the work on material gathered on the subject of Argentine Languages went ahead. The schedule was to be as follows: The Lule Tonocoté [language] by Machoni, the Vilela [language] according to Pelleschi and others; and the Mataco Mataguayo group, the first part of which was to be Pelleschi's work.

When it came to Pelleschi's turn, he asked for more time, and so the manuscript remained in the files.

● 114 By pure chance it happened that in the interim three very important documents were brought to my attention, having to do with the Argentine Mataco as well as the Bolivian Mataco, and there was nothing for it but to use them to fill the gap left us by Pelleschi's missing work.

●114 The first of those documents was the result of correspondence with the Fathers of the Franciscan convent of Tarija, and it was published in this same [562] Bulletin of the Geographic Institute under the name of "Nocten," by Father Inocencio Massei; the second document was the above mentioned one of d'Orbigny, and the third the Mataco of Father Remedi of the Salta Convent. All these works hark back to the notes made by the Missionary Fathers of the Seraphic Order, and are of great value because they stem from an extended stay among the Indians, and although the Indians are more or less reserved in matters of abusiones (1) as they call them, they are more apt to speak openly

1. Superstitions

to those wearing the habit of Saint Francis than to any other christian.

000 These monographs, as they were published, were sent to Mr. Pelleschi, partly because of the warm friendship we had for each other and partly because they might be of service, as the memories of La Madrid has been in the case of Paz's writings (2), in precipitating his

2. According to the version told me by Doctor Andrés Lamas.

work on the same subject. Let my friend say what he will, he must needs confess that these treatises inspired him, particularly when he compared them to his own notes, and found how well his observations agreed with them. The outcome was that we agreed to meet in the present year, 1896, in which he was returning from Europe and I was going down to Buenos Aires from my home in the Valle de Londres. Once having got together in this city we applied ourselves to the matter of our common interest for some eight or ten hours per week during a period of four months, until we were able to turn in the manuscript for publication.

Pelleschi had good reason not to wish to tackle the problem of his field notes alone—not that he was not capable of doing so if he set himself to it, but because it is a difficult matter to copy words such as these and distribute them properly without some intelligent help in the matter, for it all becomes confusion and doubt for one who does not have some sound principle to guide him.

Historical References

I

127 If we were to affirm that the Matacos or Mataguayos are first mentioned in the writings of the Missionary Fathers, we would expose ourselves to correction when, at some future date, the archives of our motherland be better known. However, lacking such facts, and without having the work of Father Salinas at hand, I must necessarily begin by setting down what Father Techo says in his Historia de la Provincia Jesuítica del Paraguay [History of the Jesuit Province of Paraguay].

175 Refer to volume I, chapters 40 to 43 etc., which include the years 1590, 1591 and 1592.

In the first of these years Fathers Pedro Añasco and Juan Fonte arrived at Tucuman, at the same time that the famous and apostolic Father Alonso Bárcena was evangelizing the Lules, those on the slopes of (Mount) Aconquija, not those under Father Machoni's care. Father Bárcena, full of good works, toiled without ceasing among those belligerent Indians, underfed and in imminent danger of losing his life, but undismayed for all that, so much so that when called to order by his superior he answered with these noble and heart felt words [Latin parallel text omitted. See foreign text--Translator]: "I shall go to you as soon as possible, Father, and at your feet I shall say: Here I am; send me, be it that you return me to the Lules, or to the Calchaquíes, to the Chaquenses or the Frontones, or to the uttermost *ends of the earth, for I desire with an insatiable longing* to be sent where I may suffer all things in behalf of those souls who are to be saved."

It is quite apparent here that the good Father differentiated be-
●[114] tween Lules, Calchaquíes, Chaquenses and Frentones. In my opinion the Chaquenses were the Mataraes, Matacos or Mataguayos who spoke the Tonocoté language. [564]

II

The Matará People

In chapter 41 Father Techo goes on to tell how the Spaniards founded the city of Concepción del Bermejo, 30 leagues from the point

175 a half, Alonso Bárcena, an old man 65 years of age, on fire with zeal
797 to win souls for Christ, sharing his studies with Pedro Agnasco, learned the Guarany, Natica, Quisoquina, Abipona, and Quiranguica languages, and put together vocabularies, grammars, doctrinal teachings and sermons, each for its respective use. Both of these men, before leaving Tucuman, had mastered and worked out a grammar and lexion of the Tonocoté, Kakana, Paquina and Quirandica languages, so that the Fathers who might be about to enter districts where these languages were spoken would have the way made easier. And in order that their usefulness be more widely disseminated Pedro Agnasco transcribed most of them many times, particularly the work which Alonso
MC Bárcena had done, in a very neat hand, and, thus copied out, he gave them out for general use."

114 We have here a series of very interesting facts, for not only do we learn to distinguish between one tongue and another, but we discover also the origin of that valuable Toba MS, which is at present in General Mitre's library, attributed to Father Bárcena, and which actually is very neatly written, and was not in the least bit troublesome when a transcription of it had to be made for the series on Argentine Languages. The two famous notebooks, although hardly full enough to learn Toba from, are invaluable, because they allow us to see the Toba spoken in 1592.

The chapter referred to ends with a well deserved eulogy of Fathers Bárcena and Agnasco. How many evil things can be accounted to the expulsion of the Fathers of the Company of Jesus! To that event we owe the many gaps in the chain of American languages [567]. The confusion and loss of documents was widespread, calamitous and even down to the present day we are lacking those grammars of the Kaka and Tonocoté languages which are of so much interest to history, ethnology and linguistics.

IV

MT 175 797 The Mission to the Frentones, time lost and other Matará matters.

Devoratis tot linguarum difficultatibus, says Father Techo in chapter 44. The missionaries began their efforts toward the Frentones via

M T 175 797

the Mogosnas and Naticas. "Verum (nevertheless), Deum immortalem, quo successu?" The Mogosnas had killed Francisco Vera de Aragon, the Frentones were in a state of great turmoil, and the Fathers had no other recourse but to return to their base mission among the Matarães. On that occasion no good was harvested from so much effort expended on learning the languages of the Frentones; but linguistics as a whole did gain something, and once again the Fathers of the Company gave evidence that for them martyrdom was glory.

In 1596 Gaspar Monroy and Juan Viana visited the Tonocotés and traversed the territory previously evangelized by Father Bárcena. (Techo, "Historia de la Provincia Jesuítica del Paraguay," L. II, cap. 8). [Techo, History of the Jesuit Province of Paraguay, Vol. II, Chap. 8].

In 1608 Father Diego Torres essayed to traverse these districts, and regarding this journey Father Techo recounts the following in Book III, Chapter 28 [Parallel Latin text omitted--Translator]. "The state of the Frentones was a sad one, for they wished nothing other than to continue in their perverse customs, dominated by the enemy of the human race. And on seeing them spread out in their forays to the very frontiers of Perú, and on becoming aware that the Abipones, Matacos, Naticas, Mogosnas, and Tonocotés, nations related to the Frentones, were bound in the same captivity because of lack of priests, he felt himself constrained, following the example of Saint Xavier, to return to Europe and, in the Universities of Spain and Italy, to try by dint of exhortation to awaken among the students a feeling of compassion toward such peoples." [568]

M T 114

This quote is an important one, for even if we cannot be sure that Father Techo used the [Latin] term "agnatas" in its true and restricted meaning—relatives on the father's side—he has nevertheless given us a piece of ethnic-linguistic information of great importance and which he doubtless had from some well-informed person. If the Tonocotes, Mátaguas and Mataguayos are our present day Matacos it is clear that they must have had ethnic and linguistic affinities with the other nations of the Guaicurú type, as will later on be demonstrated.

The peaceableness of the Matarães contrasted with the extreme fierceness of the Frentones is remarkable. This difference must be attributed to atavism, and from it we shall be able to derive something of interest, as will be seen later.

that they would rather die of starvation than eat a morsel of a fish of that kind. They live in a state of perpetual war, both among themselves and with the neighboring nations, which seem terrible to the outsider more on account of their cruelty than of their scope." This is an invaluable statement for both the ethnologist and the filologist. The mention made of the Aymará tongue confirms what I have suspected regarding the linguistic contact between the Aymaras and the Chaquenses of the Mocoví type. It is a pity that the careful Father does not say who those Indians were who spoke Aymará.

Lozano recounts in Book IV, Chapter 1, the following: that about the year 1532 there was a great drouth in Tucumán. The doleful natives consulted their witchdoctors. These latter painted a grim picture of what was to come, and many, giving credence to these prophecies, went off "towards the Province of the Chaco, where their miserable descendants eke out an existence etc."

It is clear then that the tradition regarding those large migrations to the Chaco is one of long standing and acceptance; but that does not mean necessarily that all the Indians which are to be found there are the progeny of a single invasion. Above all else we must bear in mind what Garcilazo de la Vega says in his Historia [History].

It appears that the Taimvias must have been the Lenguas, Payaguáes etc. who wore the button or "tembetá." This word probably derives from the Guaraní "tembé"—the lower lip—which is the one disfigured with these ornaments or lip plugs. Just as the term Orejones ["oreja" means "ear"--Translator] is applied to all those who use a disc or circular piece in that part of their anatomy, and Frentones are those who shave off the hair on the fore part of their heads, so also was the name Lenguas given to those who use lip plugs.

The Mosovias are the Moscovies, since "cc" [570] (strong guttral) becomes "s" by a process of degeneration; and that is why we find Father Tavolini spelling it Moscovitas.

Here again Mataguayo and Tonocoté tribes are brought together with others of the Toba-Mocoví type, with the warning, "diversitate linguarum quam moribus dissimiliores." This is a fact, as will be seen later; but I can say now, by way of anticipation, that it proves for us that the Mataco language is the result of linguistic hybridization in which the lexicon stems from one lineage and the grammatical usage from another.

M 175 read in the same place that the most commonly used language in the Chaco was the Tonocoté, that it was not Toba or the language of Cuzco, for it says there that "Father Juan Oloris knew the language of the Incas, and was learning Tonocoté, which was the language of the Chaco mission."

VIII

What Father Lozano Says

M 114 128 What precedes has been extracted from the work of Father Techo. I shall now do likewse with the Descripción Chorográfica [Chorographic Description] of the Chaco written by Father Lozano and published in Córdoba in 1733.

This authorretold most of what Father Techo had written in this regard, but also added many details of interest which illustrate the former text and serve to eliminate some doubts. In this chapter I shall set down all that Lozano has said about the Matacos or Mataguayos, and the references will be to the pages of the book written by this priest.

Speaking of the Paraná river, page 25, he says: "The region which this great river waters in the Chaco is inhabited by the infidel Abipones, some Mocovíes who fled from the Salta frontier, and the Callagaes, who at one time used to be called Matarães."

Father Lozano devotes pages 39 and 51 to recounting the tradition, which he relates in his history of Tucumán, [regarding Indian migration under Spanish pressure--Translator] to explain the cause for the Chaco's dense population. Undoubtedly the Chaco was the apparent refuge [573] for the more belligerent Indians and for those in revolt, and it is probable that what was happening then was a repetition of the numberless previous migrations of a like kind. Those who were dissatisfied and answered to the Inca also fled to the Chacos.

M 175 On page 51 Lozano gives a list of the nations inhabiting the Chaco from which I shall extract the following by reason of its being relevant to this study: "Mataguayos ... Amulalaes, in times past called Matarás ... Tonocotés ... Chunipies ... Callages ...

"On the river Pilcomayo, at a distance of 40 leagues from the Andean mountains live the Tobas and Mataguayos, the two nations numbering about 4,000 members and who are eaters of human flesh." (page 53). As ever the Tobas live as close neighbors to the Matacos.

C M 175 462 [845] arms. It is true that all this work which the Indian women must perform is made more tolerable by the fact that they are very strong and robust. Proof of this robustness is what they do as soon as they give birth: going to the river or stream with their newborn child they go into the water and swim about and wash themselves thoroughly, and do not experience the least harm as a result. However, should the husband capture a woman from some Indian nation or from among the C M Spaniards, her life is spared so that she may serve his wife as a slave, [595] and him as a concubine—but he must be secretive in his relationships with the captured woman for the wives are extraordinarily jealous and will make things difficult for the husband should he make advances C M towards a Spanish woman. . . .

175 "Smallpox is a great scourge to these nations, and makes [164] terrible inroads into them because they have no doctors other than the old fakers, and if the latter do not cure the sick person, and they C M usually don't, then all will abandon him to his fate. When anyone dies, [764] those who happen to be present open up a grave for him on the very spot, bury him stretched full-length, stick a spear into the ground over his resting place and hang a Christian's or some other enemy's skull on the shaft's end; then they desert the place and never return to it while C M memory of it lasts. Not even a trace of religion has been found among [771] them, rather are they perfect athiests without the least knowledge about the afterlife or the immortality of the soul. They have a certain re- C M spect for their female witchdoctors, more out of fear of what they may 175 do to them than from any good they may hope to receive from them. 756 These witchdoctors try to make the others believe that they hold in their hands the power to heal or to make sick, and these are the ones who resist the Gospel most vigorously, using their influence to keep their followers from receiving Holy Baptism or allowing their children to receive it, and persuading them that baptism will kill them. To this end, to bolster their arguments, they take advantage of what happens in any mission post when the missionaries only baptize those who are about to die, and as the Indians then usually see such a person die, the noxious error becomes more firmly rooted in their untutored minds." "Descripción del Chaco" [Chorographic Description of the Chaco] page 82.

C M This account by the Missionary Fathers is confirmed by what has 114 been observed by travelers who have visited these same Indians in more modern times, even in the present day. [579]

XV

The Mataguayos

In the year 1884 the Reverend Father Alejandro María Covrado in collaboration with another missionary published in Florence certain Noticias Históricas [Historical Information] originating in the Franciscan College of Tarija and other missions, and in appendix L we find a very important account with reference to the Mataguayos which I shall quote: - page 535, etc. "The Mataguayos are spread over a vast region of the Chaco, especially the left bank of the Bermejo and the right bank of the Pilcomayo. On the Salta frontier they are commonly called Matacos, and Noctenes on the Tarija frontier, which is a corrupt form of Octenai, a name [592] given them by the Chiriguanos and which, in turn, appears to be a corruption of Huenneyei (1), which is what the

1. Plural of the word which means men.
(J. Pelleschi)

Matáguayos call themselves. By way of epilogue we shall give an account of what was reported, regarding the ways and customs of these savage tribes, by a missionary of this college who lived amongst them for many years:

"In their features and coloring the Mataguayos, Matacos or Noctenes, which are one and the same people, are very little different from the Chiriguanos. Their customs however are very different, and their languages absolutely so. Their villages are small, consisting usually of the several branches of only one family. They do not like to construct them in open places, preferring the dense forests and reed beds. The dwelling places are small huts made of branches or cane stuck in the ground, bent over and gathered at the ends, and covered with straw. On the inside they are similar to ovens; they are less than two meters high and their size is proportionate to the number of people to be housed in them. The ground passes for their bed, and is either quite bare or else covered with a mat of rushes or the skin of some animal. Cleanliness is utterly lacking. When the place gets to be full of fleas or other insects or filth they burn their hovels and build others not far off.

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[774] some animal according to its merits in this life. They also recognize
776 with the name Ohott-at (1) (great spirit) a superior being who created

1. "O'hot" = spiritness; "tat" and "taj" = augmentative (J.P.)

them, but they do not worship this being at all. They are in great fear of an evil being who, wandering about at night, harms man, for which reason they call it Onnescilele (2) (night wanderer) and commit

2. "Onne" (hunat) = night; "sci" = locative; "lêle" = patronimic (J.P.)

themselves to his service in order to win his good will."

XVI

Some Observations on the Previous Chapter

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● 114 The notes on appendix L written by Father Alejandro M.
101 Corrado are full of material of interest for this treatise. In them he establishes that "Matacos, Mataguayos and Noctenes are one and the same thing" explaining that in Salta they are called Matacos, and in Tarija Noctenes, while the Mataguayos themselves refer to themselves as Huenneyei.

According to the good Father the name Noctenes is a corruption of Octenai, a term used by the Chiriguayos to refer to these Indians. I find myself incompetent to argue this point about the origin of the name Noctenes; but since the Tobas and Guaycurûes owe it to the Guaranîes that they are known to us by their present names it would not be at all strange that a similar thing had happened in this case also.

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101 We are given to understand by this account that not everyone
114 calls the Mataguayos Noctenes, and one can understand that this is the cause of the disappearance of the Tonocoté nation. Tonocoté was a name limited to certain tribes only, but which doubtless was extended to many others, as far as language goes, because it was the first learned

M/T by the missionaries and because it served them well in catechising all 114 the members of the same language family.

101 Father Cardus writes Noctenes in such a way that the obtrusive "c" participates to a degree in the sound which the Mocovíes add to every [597] medial "t" (see "Mocoví Fonologia" [Mocoví Phonology]). Because of this variant we can see that the Mataco-Mataguayos could just as well be called Noctenes as Notenes.

From the sound of the name Tonocoté I would say that it is made up of Noctenes or Notenes plus the Chaquense and very Mataco prefix "to" which means "the." The final "n" is of Spanish influence and is merely indicative of nationality. A parallel to this is that we say Tobas when the actual root word is "obá"—face—because the Guaraní language attaches to all its nouns etc. a demonstrative prefix of relation which can be "t", "r", etc.

Hervas speaks of Toconotés, Techo and others of Tonocotés. To my way of seeing it the difference of opinion can be resolved in the following manner: "Noté" is the same as "Nocoté," and the prefixes "To" and "Toco" are also identical by way of the well known degeneration "Toco" "Toho" "To." I mention the latter because even though "Nocten" and "Noten" may agree exactly in that they refer to the same thing, the qualifying prefix need not necessarily be the same in both cases.

Until such time as some more reasonable explanation appears or some contrary one is put forward I claim that the terms Tonocoté, Toconoté, Nocten and Noten have identical lexical value.

Every student of the Guaraní and related Chaco languages must needs confess that "t" and "to" are never more than demonstrative prefixes. I do not deny that "Toco" may have a more concrete meaning, such as—Colorado, the Tenco River, etc. What matters is that recognition be given to the fact that the Noctenes or Notenes may be the To-nocotes of history. This would explain all the contradictions to be found in the writings of Machoni, Jolís and Hervas.

It is inconceivable that a nation as strong as the Tonocoté could have disappeared amidst so much else that has been preserved. It was the typical Mataco, Mataguayo, Matará etc. tribe which tradition says had exiled itself to the basin of the Pilcomayo—there we find Noctenes or Notenes, which are Matacos and Mataguayos. We are then in the position of having to confess that these Indians are, more or less, the Tonocotés of history, and that the name had been lost because it was a

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M nickname given them by neighboring nations who then stopped using
114 it. The name has cropped up again at the present time because the
10 missionaries have returned to those missions from the Chiriguano side and have adopted the name by which the latter usually referred to them.

Even if it were a matter of a name originating in the nation itself there would be some latitude in its transliteration, but the fact being that they are [598] nicknames invented by other Indians and heard and transcribed by the Spaniards allows of much greater freedom, and I do not believe that the hypothesis that the Noctenes of Father Corrado are the Tonocotés of Father Techo is so fantastic a one.

It may not be superfluous to note that the Indians whom we call Tobas call themselves by the name Tocouitt, which, compared to the other Mocouitt leaves as residue the word Toco which could be compared to the "Toco" or "To" of the Indans treated in this chapter. In the Toba and other allied languages the "C" is a false sound and the syncopation of syllables is the rule

XVII

What Father Cardús Has to Say About the Matacos, Mataguayos, etc.

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114 The Reverend Franciscan Father José Cardús published in Barcelona in 1886 his work entitled "Las Misiones Franciscanas" [The Franciscan Missions] of Bolivia in connection with the College of San José de Tarata. In it we find the following information about the Matacos (pages 250 to 258) which I shall quote, thus opening myself up to criticism for over prolixity, yet I feel I am justified because the information is important and credible since the missionaries write with exactness of what they have seen and known at close quarters.

I have not seen the Matacos and do not know them, and I am wary of allowing myself to be carried away by preconceived notions. Yet I must of necessity quote and not comment upon my authors who will thus say what they wish to say and not what some other person wishes them to say.

It can be said that from the time of the Conquest such information as we have about the Indians in their ramifications and languages we owe to the Missionary Fathers. Any attempt to write about these Indians whom the Spaniards found on our continent really has to take very specially into account the writings of these meritorious soldiers of Christ.

"The Matacos are also known by the names Mataguayos, Notenes, Vejoses, Ocoles, Malbalas, Chunupis (1) and others, according to location. All of them with only slight differences speak the same language and their customs are practically identical. They occupy the western part of central and southern Chaco, principally both banks of the Bermejo River and the right bank of the Pilcomayo." [599]

1. Not to be confused with the Chumupi-Vilelas.

"The number of these Indians is probably about 20,000. Some of them already have dealings with the frontier Christians, among whom they spend some time each year, working on their ranches; while others live in complete isolation from the whites, whom they regard as their enemies, and not without reason, especially the Argentines who for some years now have been systematically ousting them from their lands, persecuting and exterminating them. It is probable then that within a few years the Matacos will have undergone great changes in their manner of living and will have diminished in number. Be that as it may the present day Matacos are still constituents of quite a large tribe which is different in some respects from the others.

The Mataco is of middling stature, somewhat slim and of a dark coppery color; apathetic in nature, reserved and wary, his glance reflects suspicion and treachery. His manners are boorish and his person and physiognomy vile and repulsive. He is a thief by instinct and he also steals because he considers it his duty. He is long-suffering and warlike, lazy and dirty in habit and innately cowardly and vengeful. The individual members of the neighboring tribes are characterized by a mental alertness which, though untutored is there for all to see. Not so the Matacos, who are mentally sluggish and to whom one cannot even attribute astuteness, in spite of their being sneak thieves. They are admired by all for the apparent lack of feeling with which they endure insults and also for the cold-bloodedness with which they will stab an enemy or allow themselves to be stabbed."

114 It is strange that in the last two reports so much importance has been given to the Noctén tribes about which nothing is said by authors writing in colonial times. This in itself already tends to favor the hypothesis that the Noctenes may be the Tonocotés.

In this part of the continent it does not seem that there occurred that veritable extermination of whole tribes, such as was the case with the Charruas of Uruguay and we must therefore search about somewhere for the 60,000 and more Indians who understood or spoke the Tonocoté language. Among them were the Mataguayos, who exist down to the present day; it would be only natural, then, to affirm that Mataguayo is a dialect of Tonocoté, and since Noctén and Mataguayo are closely related dialects, it follows that Noctén is as much a dialect of Tonocoté as is Mataguayo.

In the following chapter I shall set forth a report which was sent to me by Father Eliseo Molina of the Franciscan College at Tarija. [609]

XIX

What Father Doroteo Giannecchini has to Say Regarding the Noctenes and Other Mataco Tribes

101 "The Noctenes, Matacos, Vejoses, Guiznaes, and Chulupies belong to one single nation, for all speak the same language and have the same customs."

184 "Such nations are differentiated by their name and by traits which I shall call provincial or local."

101 "Our Noctenes, for example, who are the ones who inhabit the country between the foot of the Pisapo mountain range and Pikírenda, 50 121 or 60 leagues to the east, are called Noctenes. In the vicinity of Pikírenda they take the name of Guiznaes; but they are of the same family as our Noctenes and are even related to them by blood."

"From Pikírenda onwards, some 30 leagues, more or less, and up to the Paraguay River they take the name of Chulupies; and along the whole right bank of the Pilcomayo River, from our first Noctén mission on to the Paraguay River, it is the same tribe: their

101 131 speech and customs are somewhat different, but in substance it is the same language, and they understand each other perfectly when each speaks in his own way."

"Across from the Colonia Crevaux, on the left bank towards the north there is another tribe called Chorotis which must originally have been a group captured by the Noctenes for their language is a true Mataco or Noctén dialect and many words are identical with Noctén words."

"It is true that these Chorotis live as unto themselves forming a separate tribe, but they are related to and have continual dealings with the Noctenes. Their pronunciation is, however, much clearer and more intelligible than that of the Noctenes."

"These same Noctenes are related to the Matacos of Oran and the Chaco, in which place the Noctenes are called Matacos, and the Matacos living between the left bank of the Oran River and the reservation in which we had a mission at the beginning of this century, take the name of Vejoses, and have their own local way of speaking the same language as the Noctenes and Matacos. Higher up, that is in our Bolivian Itiyuro, they again take the name of Matacos." [610]

[197] "The fact is then that they do not have what might be called a separate language—rather do they vary the pronunciation of certain terms which does not constitute a separate language but a local variation, as happens with the Spanish of Bolivians, Argentines, Chilians, etc., and between town and town, region and region."

This description was sent to me when I asked for a Pater-noster in Mataguayo, having already received one in Nocten.

● 114 All that has been transcribed in the previous chapters shows that in the opinion of the missionary fathers the typical tribe was the Nocten, and that this is the name they use where we would say Matacos and Mataguayos. It is to be understood, then, that Nocten is nothing but a corruption of the name Tonocoté or Toconoté, already mentioned.

XX

Geographic Distribution of Mataco-type Nations

101 131 From all that has been told us by the Fathers of the Company and of the Franciscan Missions it can be deduced that the Mataco tribes occupy a diagonal region which in times past extended from the basin

174 in these matters will give serious study to these skulls and in that way confirm my hypothesis based on what the languages themselves allow us to glimpse.

The ethnology of a given people, if it is to be of value, must
● 114 include the anthropology of that people. The language alone is insufficient because of the well known tendency to adopt foreign elements on both a large and a small scale.

I am sorry that I do not know as much as does Quatrefages; but if a man as eminent as he is has had to confess his ignorance in linguistic matters, much more so may I leave the question open until such time as the anthropological problems which Argentina poses to the authorities in that field, have been solved. I am satisfied to point out the paths which I believe I have found and to declare that judging by extant languages, everything in the Chaco is a mixed bag.

Further than this I do not dare to push my hypothesis. Let this quote from Quatrefages found in his "Hommes Fossiles et Hommes Sauvages" [Fossil Men and Savage Men] serve me as an excuse: "Furthermore in problems of this kind the physical characteristics are in every way more conclusive as evidence than all others. A nation can change in language, in customs, in industries, sometimes in a relatively short period; but height, skin, cranial shape—that cannot be lost so quickly" (p. 577). [615]

XXII

The Language of the Matacos

One of the mysteries of modern linguistics is the lack of information on this interesting group of languages, spoken by tribes which still occupy a considerable territory in the Argentine and Bolivian Chacos.

Little enough was known about the Mocoví, Abipon, and Lule, but that little was enough to reveal the grammatical workings of the respective languages. Yet about Mataco neither Hervas nor Adelung

114 can tell us more than that it existed.

It is hard to understand how the Mataco texts of Jesuit Mission times could have disappeared so completely, a thing lamented over by Machoni more than half a century before the suppression of the order.

I cannot believe that there does not exist, somewhere, a written record of some sort regarding it, and I do not despair of being able to run it down; but for the time being I must limit myself to the works of Father Romedí (of the Seraphic Order), to the notes which were presented to me by the Franciscan College of Tarija and finally and in the place of honor as it were, the field notes of engineer Juan Pelleschi. (1)

> 1. When I wrote this the Vejoz manuscript had not come into my hands.

In the chapters which treat the subject of the history of the Tonocotés it seems to be proved that the Tonocotés, Mataguayos, Matacos, and the Mocovi-type Guaycurú tribes, were groupings of one single race, which spoke different dialects but which had a great deal in common.

197 We know now that the Noctenes, Mataguayos, and Matacos are tribes of the same family and speak dialects which are as similar to each other as are Portuguese and Spanish. These dialects, by their grammatical construction can in no way be confused with the Lule of Machoni, since the former prefix their pronominal particles while the latter suffix them.

114 Hervas and Jolis (2) have disproved Machoni's theory that

> 2. In Italian, as in Latin, "J" sounds like "Y."

[616] the Tonocotés who spoke Lule had taken refuge in the Pilcomayo River basin. Neither at that time nor at the present has any tribe been discovered to correspond to Machoni's Lules in that area, but there do exist there many of the Nocten, Mataco and Mataguayo type whom I suppose to be the real Tonocotés or Toconotés.

193 From the most cursory examination of the Mataco or Mataguayo, or Nocten tongue it is evident that it is a language which prefixes its pronominal particles, while the Lule has just as strong a bent towards suffixing them.

197 This fact alone is sufficient to separate Mataco from Lule with a barrier which is not to be bridged by Father Machoni's brief and [114] indirect reference. This does not mean that I deny that Mataco and Lule may share common words—these analogies will be noted later—but the grammatical mechanism and the pronouns themselves point in absolutely opposite directions.

Following the classification which we have been setting down in this study, Mataco corresponds to the Atlantic type insofar as the position of affixes is concerned, although it is my impression that it leans more closely towards the Moja branch than towards the Guaraní, in spite of the greater immediacy of the latter.

114 Before proceeding further let us examine the arguments on 197 which Machoni rests his hypothesis that the Tonocoté of Techo and others is really Lule:

In the first place the Lule language is not widespread but limited to the five nations: Lule, Isistiné, Toquistiné, Oristiné (1)

1. The Missionaries of whom Hervas made enquiries deny that there be Oristinés.

and Tonocoté. The Tonocotés numbered 60,000 souls. (Machoni's prologue.)

Secondly, the Tonocotés in the XVII century lived near Concepción del Bermejo and were evangelized by Fathers Bárcena and Anasco. These Indians taking offense at the Spaniards, went off to the banks of the Yabebirí and Pilcomayo Rivers. Ibid.

Thirdly the Lules, Isistinés, Toquistines and Oristinés were evangelized by Fathers Bárcena, Monroy and Viana in 1589 and visited by Saint Francisco Solano. Ibid.

In the fourth place the Isistinés, Toquistinés and Oristinés fled to the Chaco and there remained for over a hundred years until in 1710 they came before don Esteban de Urizar y Arespacochaga who placed them in the Valbuena and Miraflores reservations; Father Machoni was with them for 9 years. [617]

114 In the fifth place, Bárcena compiled a grammar and vocabu-
197 lary of the language of these Indians when he evangelized the Tonocotés and Lules. Machoni confesses that nothing remains of this grammar other than the mention of its existence which appears in the missionary's biography. Ibid.

Conclusión: Ergo this Lule tongue is Tonocoté, common to the aforementioned five nations, and used by the Matará nation and many others of the Chaco for the sole reason that they are neighbors of the Tonocotés and Lules and trade with them.

Regarding all this series of non sequiturs Fathers Yolis [sic] and Hervás have given full account. Machoni confesses that nothing remained of Tonocoté other than the unconnected bits of information which he reports, which certainly have no philological interest whatever.

The Lules of Machoni may or may not be those referred to by Father Techo, but with regard to the Tonocotés Machoni has not given the least proof that they are the Lules; and it goes without saying that the language which he called Lule cannot possibly be stretched to include the Tonocotés.

Even as regards the work of the missionaries this identification of Lules and Tonocotés was unfortunate, for in that region of the Pilcomayo live the Noctenes, Matacos, Mataguayos and Tobas, for whom the Lule tongue is hardly the one to be recommended as common currency.

Had Hervás known about the prefixing character of the Mataguayo and Nocten etc. languages, he would have been even harsher in his criticism of the Lules-Tonocotés of Father Machioni [sic].

Being, as he certainly was, a good philologist he would have known that in a hundred years a suffixing language could hardly change over into being a prefixing one. This violent change is not to be found in any of the other Chaco languages. The Toba of today is the same as the Toba of Bárcena's time, and so also are the other languages.

It must be conceded then that the Lule of Machoni was not and
197 could never possibly be the Tonocoté of the early missions.

Since we know that the Mataguayos spoke Tonocoté in the period about which we are writing, and that at the present time Noctenes, Mataguayos, Matacos and many other tribes speak dialects of Mataco,

000 more or less understandable way, the mysteries of the Christian religion and the teachings conducive to them. Their endeavors were often crowned with great success and where the pernicious example of long-standing but bad Christians did not interfere to sterilize the results of conversions, the new Christians did honor to their teachers and to the religion they professed, as was seen in the Guaraní missions.

The savage is an eminently conscientious man and does his duty with the regularity of a machine. It is the civilized man who has taught him to profess one faith and put into practice another. [620]

In spite of all criticism to the contrary it is unquestionable that the Missionary Fathers made their Indians understand the mysteries of our religion as well as many who are not Indians understand them. It is a fact, nevertheless, that for many persons it would be preferable to know the syntax and vocabulary of a new language without the intervention of interpretations which are sometimes forced with the object of introducing a new stream of ideas and concepts.

If this is true of the language, how much more is it so of the customs, habits, etc. of those who speak it. The missionary has only one dilemma: that which is not God's is the Devil's, and the God of the Indians, regardless of how good he may be, is a Devil in his eyes. Apart from all this, to think otherwise would expose them to grave charges from the direction of their superiors, and something worse from the direction of the Church.

We therefore always need the research of a lay person who will describe the Indian and his language to us without any preconceived ideas about either one. We want to hear someone who has studied the Indian in his savagery and who is ready to recognize that the evil of the good Indian may be a better thing than the good of an evil man who may call himself civilized: I am speaking of "good" and "evil" according to our idea of these two qualities.

● 114 This lack has been filled in a very special way by engineer Juan Pelleschi in his well known Otto Mesi nel Gran Ciacco, [Eight Months in the Gran Chaco], but there were missing from that great work the abundant and excellent vocabularies, dialogues and sentences which remained unedited in his travel portfolios. In these there is set down the way of thinking and of speaking of the Mataco Indian when he is "at home" in his forest and in his savage simplicity. Mr. Pelleschi has not wished to correct the Spanish syntax of the informant when the sentence was invented by him in one language and then the other, which gives even greater value to these illustrations of what the Uicquñ tongue is like.

114 Mr. Pelleschi has done what Dr. Leuz is doing in Chile for the Araucanos, and with as much ground for applause.

In the author's published work my secretary and I have had no part other than that of ordering it alphabetically and compiling a Mataco-Spanish lexicon, without which no study of a language can be considered complete.

As the original is in Italian I have had to translate that part of the book which is here reproduced, leaving the checking and correcting to the author. The English understood the importance of the work before [621] we did and it was shameful that the most modern and most complete description of our Indians was written in a foreign language and had not been put into the national tongue. The Geographic Institute, by means of this publication has erased that black mark, and has gone further by adding the vocabularies etc., which are lacking in the original and which give so much greater value to this work.

It is not altogether impossible that the author will make a study, later on, of what is here published in order to perfect his essay on the grammar of the Mataco language. But even if he were not to do this, what has been published is enough to give us a pretty full grasp of what the language of these Indians is and what it is not.

As the translation has been checked by the author himself, those passages which may appear to be incomplete or in which it may be observed that extra material has been inserted, are to be laid at the author's door, as must also all new material with which the work has been supplemented.

104 In the key which precedes the vocabularies the derivation of words and phrases will be designated together with the key letter. As will readily be understood, this is a valuable addition to the vocabularies, for a new word, heard only once and from one person is exposed to error, but when its lexical and phonetic value is attested several times over, little doubt can remain about it. On this score also is Mr. Pelleschi's work highly interesting, it being a step in the direction of a better understanding of the tangled phonology of the Chaco languages of the Guaycurú type, of which Mataco is an important part.

The map was made by Güido Jacobacci, Engineer, in accord with information which we have given him and with the help of the map of Father Jolis and Corrado, and also of Araos'. One can see

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"Note:--The material contained in the foregoing chapters has been taken from the book Otto Mesi ["Eight Months" --Translator] in which it was set down in a hodgepodge manner and in the order in which the author had come upon it in his travels, which is only natural when one is going about with a note pad in one's hand faithfully setting down facts of interest. This order was not convenient in a work such as the present for many reasons, not the least being ease of reference. However little these Indian languages may lend themselves to rules of a sum, es, fui type, it is always best to try to explain them in grammatical terms familiar to us. Everything is conventional anyway in this realm for, except for cases such as the Volapuk, every language was first spoken and then written and only much later reduced to grammar.

The chapter dealing with pronouns was compiled from loose observations found in several chapters. The importance of this "part of speech," if we may use the term, when speaking of the Mataco language, necessitated a separate chapter, however short and unsatisfactory, in view of the fact that it is the most difficult element for every collector of vocabularies. This difficulty was the cause of the author's not having such a chapter in his original essay, a lack which we have here remedied--The Editor."

[Pages 275-350 of the Spanish text consist of a Mataco vocabulary which has not been translated into English and will be found only in category 116 with the rest of the foreign text. --Analyst]

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133 the river Pilcomayo, following its sinuous course, and this is practically the only way known to white people hitherto. An explorer who undertook to penetrate at random into the interior of the unknown country east of the river, without being accompained by Indian guides, would be almost sure to perish from thirst within a few days. Many promising expeditions into the Chaco have ended disastrously in this way. Only the natives know where the few water places are to be found. Generally these consist of small pools, the stinking brown or green water of which seems almost undrinkable to a white man; but the explorer soon finds it good enough even for him and it will save the life both of man and beast.

648 Another danger to the explorer is the hostility of the savage natives who inhabit the country. This aspect of the Chaco tribes has become almost proverbial owing to the fact that several explorers have met a disastrous end at the hands of the savage Indians. In our own days the best known of these unfortunate explorers are Crevaux, Ibareta, and Boggiani, of whom the first mentioned was killed by the Toba Indians on the banks of the Rio Pilcomayo, at the place which still bears his name. Several expeditions have tried to explore the country, following the course of the Pilcomayo down to its confluence with the Rio Paraguay, but the first which succeeded was the Bolivian expediton under D. Campos in 1883. The interior of the Chaco, however, is still to a great extent unknown, and ethnographic exploration of this interesting country did not begin until a few decades ago.

●114 The above description of the Chaco has particular reference to the Argentine and Bolivian Gran Chaco and more especially to the region on both sides of the river Pilcomayo, of which I have acquired personal knowledge. My ethnological studies have in fact been limited to the most important of the tribes inhabiting that region, tribes which, when I first visited them, were very imperfectly known. The Pilcomayo is the largest of the few affluents that the great river Paraguay receives from the west. For the main part of its course the river flows through very little known country, and the tribes that have settled on its banks or roam about on the grassy plains or in the thickets of the interior still live completely — or at any rate did live at the time when I visited them — in a state of nature. The most important of these tribes are the Mataco, the Choroti, the Tobas, and the Ashluslay, who live partly on the right (Argentine), partly on the left (Bolivian) side of the river. The Mataco, the Choroti, and the Ashluslay, who linguistically are closely related to each other, form a group of their own. The Tobas, although a typical Chaco tribe, both

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linguistically, anthropologically and in their whole character differ essentially from them. Their culture is undoubtedly the most important and the most interesting native culture on the Pilcomayo and in the whole Chaco.

Among the Pilcomayo tribes moreover many travellers reckon the Avas or Chiriguano [1]), who inhabit a large territory between the Upper

A settler's ranch on the Bolivian side of the Pilcomayo.

Rio Pilcomayo and the river Parapiti in the north, a territory forming the western limit of the unknown Chaco boreal. The Avas, who belong to the great Guarani people, form with the Guaranized Chané a special group with many distinguishing features in their culture, and should not therefore be included among the Chaco tribes proper. In 1912 I visited the largest villages inhabited by the Avas and also made some notes

[1]) 'Chiriguano' is a nickname given to these Indians by their enemies, the Quichuas, and has never been recognised by themselves; on the contrary, they regard it as an insult. These Guarani Indians call themselves *Ava* (that is, 'men'), and this is the only name that should be used of them in literature.

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on their customs. These Indians are now half-civilized and Christians in name, and we owe our best knowledge of their culture to the Catholic missionaries who have been active amongst them in former times. In the south the Avas have had contact with some of the Chaco tribes, especially with the Mataco, but without receiving any cultural influence from them.

The principal objects of my researches in the Chaco have been the Choroti and the Tobas as well as those Mataco Indians that have settled on the Bolivian side of the Pilcomayo, a tribe generally known under the name Mataco-Nocténes. Along the middle course of the river, not far from the Bolivian fort Guachalla, I also occasionally came in contact with the Ashluslay Indians, but found no opportunity to study their customs more thoroughly.

Before I proceed to describe the customs of the Indians visited by me, I shall give a short account of my travels in the Chaco.

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Choroti SK6

Chapter I.

My travels in the Gran Chaco.

In October 1911 I arrived in Buenos Aires by an English steamer, proceeding directly from London, and a few days later continued my journey by railway to my future field of research. The Argentine government, to which I was introduced by the Russian minister in Buenos Aires, Count Maximoff, did everything to facilitate my undertaking and even offered me an escort on my journey to the Indians — an offer which however I was obliged courteously to decline. My nearest goal was the sugar factory of Esperanza, situated about three miles from the small town San Pedro in the province of Jujuy in northern Argentine. At this factory thousands of Indian labourers are employed to cut the sugar cane in the fields surrounding the village. Among these native labourers almost all Chaco tribes are represented — especially the Tobas, the Mataco and the Choroti — and there are instances of Indians arriving from the interior parts of the country where no white man has yet put his foot. Here I had an excellent opportunity of making preliminary acquaintance with the Indian tribes whom I proposed to visit later on in their own land.

I was received with great kindness and hospitality by the owners of the sugar factory, the great English firm Leach Brothers, who helped me to get into contact with the Indians. At Esperanza I stayed for three weeks, making preparations for my expedition into the Chaco, so that it was not until in the middle of November that I could set out upon my journey. From San Pedro de Jujuy it is only a few hours railway journey to Embarcación, which at that time was the last station towards the north. From there on one could only travel on mule-back along the road which from Embarcación goes to southern Bolivia. Messrs. Leach had helped me to buy the mules at Esperanza and also got two peons to accompany me at least on the first part of my expedition.

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M C [465]

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114 The way which leads from Embarcación up to Bolivia is what is called a *camino carretero*, a broad road suitable for big carts drawn by mules. It is illustrative of the primitive means of communication in Bolivia that nearly all articles of commerce had to be transported along this road up to such distant places as Santa Cruz de la Sierra and Mojos in the heart of Bolivia — a journey which takes months to accomplish. My own nearest goal was a place called Yacuiba, a big village which at that time belonged to Bolivia, but a few years later on was annexed by Argentine. The journey from Embarcación to Yacuiba takes seven days. Embarcación is situated on the bank of the Rio Bermejo, a tributary of the Pilcomayo, and this river had to be crossed, the mules swimming over it. Having a few hours later passed the small village Miraflores, we arrived at the open plains varied with small forests which here form the westernmost part of the enormous territory of the Gran Chaco. These regions are almost uninhabited; only isolated *tolderias* (villages) of the Mataco Indians are found, from which occasionally we could hear the beating of drums or the incantations of the medicine-men, when they were trying to call forth rain or to drive away evil disease-bringing spirits. The scarcity of water in fact was great, for although it was the beginning of the rainy season very little rain had as yet fallen, and at the halting-places it was generally difficult to find water for the beasts. In a place called Bomba, inhabited by a lonely settler, we had to pay for the drinking-water, which was brought from a distant pool near the cordilleras rising in the west.

114 About midway between Embarcación and Yacuiba lies the village Tartagal, which at that time only consisted of a couple of poor houses. In 133 this region nature entirely changes its aspect. The traveller, having previously marched for days through open plains and thickets, suddenly enters a virgin forest of almost tropical grandeur, where the great variety of climbers and creepers, covering not only the giant trees but also bushes and plants, especially attracts attention. This is a type of scenery which is only met with in the vicinity of the Andes, never in the interior of the Chaco. We had to march a couple of days through this interesting primeval forest before we again came out on the plains. Just north of Tartagal there is the small village Aguaray — like all villages in this region, rather a group of primitive ranches — whence it is only one day's journey to Yacuiba.

Yacuiba was formerly a place of bad repute, being a resort of criminals and adventurers of the kind so frequently met with in places far away from the centres of civilization in Argentine and Bolivia. At the

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114 time of my stay in Yacuiba conditions were much improved, and the village has since made considerable progress, chiefly owing to some foreign commercial houses which have established themselves there. Yacuiba has now several hundred inhabitants, among whom there is a small number of Europeans. The village became my head-quarters for the whole time that I travelled in the Chaco. One of the foreigners, Don Carlos Holzer, did me great service in helping me to get peons and to prepare for my expeditions into different parts of the country.

114 491 There are two roads leading from Yacuiba to the river Pilcomayo; the one, passing through the village of Caiza, takes the traveller to the small place called Crevaux; the other leading directly along the line at the 22nd degree of latitude to the Bolivian fort d'Orbigny. Both these places are situated close to the river, the former a few leagues to the north of the latter. On my first expedition to the Pilcomayo in November 1911 I took the second road, the one leading to d'Orbigny. From Yacuiba this place can be reached in three days, travelling on horseback. In addition to the riding-mules I had three baggage mules and was accompanied by two peons none of whom had been at the Pilcomayo before. These regions are entirely uninhabited; there are neither settlers nor Indian villages. [133] The way goes partly through deep forests, partly through arid deserts and — near the river — through grassy plains. The right (Argentine) bank of the Pilcomayo is extremely flat; it is difficult to imagine more monotonous scenery.

114 At d'Orbigny a small body of ten Bolivian soldiers commanded by a lieutenant was garrisoned and I had counted on their assistance at the crossing of the Pilcomayo, which in the rainy season is very broad and rapid. The fort, however, turned out to be situated on the opposite side of the river and was not even visible from the spot where we were. No human being could be seen on whom it would have been possible to call for assistance. At last we caught sight of two Indians who had swum over the river from the opposite bank evidently for the sake of fishing on the Argentine side where the water is lower. They were Toba Indians who knew enough Spanish to inform us that there was absolutely no canoe to be had either on this or the other side of the river, and that all must cross it by swimming, even the mules. Since the Pilcomayo at this place has a breadth of nearly one mile, it seemed by no means a trifle to cross it with the baggage and the mules. Happily the rainy season had not yet properly begun, so the river was comparatively low. The Indians offered to help us take over the beasts and for this purpose went in search

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Choroti SK 6

M 114

of a ford. Those Chaco Indians who live beside the river, clever swimmers as they are, possess great experience and dexterity in performing such tasks and in fact, no white traveller in the Chaco could easily do without their services. At the fordable place where we crossed to the other side the water was so low that men and animals had to swim only a short distance, our clothes being taken over in a big cow's hide folded up so as to form a sort of vessel. Within half an hour we were all safely on the other side of the river and could continue our journey.

[T 101]

The Bolivian sub-tribes of the great Toba nation inhabit the region between fort d'Orbigny in the south and the village Villa Montes (Mission of San Francisco), situated about twenty leagues to the north, on the left bank of the Pilcomayo. I proposed to visit these Indians later on. For the present my destination was the country of the Choroti which lies about midway between the fort d'Orbigny and the next Bolivian military station on the Pilcomayo, Guachalla. To reach the first Choroti village I had to travel about eight leagues along the narrow path which — in the main following the river but at times retiring far from it — runs from d'Orbigny in a southerly direction. This path is in some places almost obliterated, especially when it leads through the plains, and for the traveller there is the frequent risk of losing it, in which case he may easily go astray in the wilds.

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It was in the beginning of December that I first made the acquaintance of the Choroti in their own land. These Indians are now what the Bolivians call *indios mansos* (tame Indians) and there is no danger for a white man in visiting them. The few white settlers on the Pilcomayo have very seldom had any trouble with the Choroti, who — in contrast to the arrogant Tobas — are a peaceful people. A *kilai* (the name given every white man) is therefore kindly received if he himself treats the Indians well and does not arrive empty-handed. So it was with Nordenskiöld during his stay among the Choroti, and so it was with me. It is not possible to live among the Chaco Indians without bringing articles of exchange, and for my own part I had a good supply of such things. Among these were not only shirts, needles, thread, small mirrors, glass beads etc., but above all tobacco which is the article most appreciated by these Indians. Tobacco in fact is a sort of tribute which everybody must pay who travels in the Chaco and has to deal with the natives. Every male member of the small community whose guest I was had to receive his share — of course only a small quantity, just enough to fill the pipe a couple of times — and the gift had to be repeated every day. The Choroti

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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C 114

In 1908 another Swedish ethnographer, Erland Nordenskiöld, lived in all for about three months among four or five of the Pilcomayo tribes, and in his popular book *Indianerleben in El Gran Chaco* (1912) has given a general account of the material culture and the daily life of these natives. For detailed and methodical studies of their social customs, religious beliefs, etc., Nordenskiöld had no time and no training, and probably very little interest, since the main object of his travels in the Gran Chaco was to make ethnographic collections for Swedish museums. It is curious that although Nordenskiöld lived on very friendly terms with the Choroti and the Ashluslay and tried in every respect to accommodate himself to their customs, he could find out nothing about their intellectual culture and religion, not even the name of their spirits. Thus for instance Nordenskiöld erroneously describes the dances of the Choroti as being purely profane, overlooking their magical or religious character, which of course gives them their chief interest. As to the Tobas, the most important of the Chaco tribes, Nordenskiöld did not visit them at all.

M 114

The English missionary Rickhard J. Hunt, who visited the Choroti after I had left the Chaco, has chiefly studied their language.

My own task was to complete Nordenskiöld's general account of the material culture of the Chaco tribes with as detailed studies of their customs and intellectual culture as possible. For this purpose I stayed about eight months among the Choroti, after which I settled down among the Tobas, making also occasional visits to some Mataco tribes which were culturally closely related to the Tobas. My studies were rendered particularly difficult by the fact that neither the Choroti nor the Tobas speak Spanish, while interpreters were impossible to obtain. I had to pick up both languages gradually, which of course meant a considerable waste of time since language to me could only be a medium for the study of native culture and was not in itself the object of my studies. It was not until the end of my stay among the Choroti that I met some Indians who could speak a little Spanish. Another thing which, in its way, hampered my studies of the Choroti was the difficulty of getting provisions during the dry season, when the natives themselves are often brought to the very verge of starvation. Since the river was as yet too swollen to allow me to cross it for the purpose of returning to Yacuiba, I myself had similar difficulties until at last I got some provisions from one of the few settlers living on the Pilcomayo.

Owing to these circumstances the material collected by me among the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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114 Choroti and Toba Indians is not so rich as I wished it to be, nor have I been able to realize my plan of returning later to Chaco for the sake of completing it. My next great expedition took me to the Indians of the Amazon territory. However, I think the new facts I have been able to gather relating to their general sociology, their customs and beliefs, magic dances. etc., form an important contribution to our knowledge of the intellectual culture of the Chaco Indians, so strangely neglected by earlier ethnographical travellers. In fact, the dances of the South American Indians have never before been the object of detailed studies. The Chaco culture has in many respects a character of its own, differing markedly, for instance, from the cultures peculiar to the tropical virgin forests in northern South America. Taken as a whole it is much poorer; neither the material nor the intellectual culture in these inhospitable regions has attained the same stage of development as in the regions better endowed by nature. Even the rites and ceremonies in which religious life finds expression among the Chaco Indians are comparatively few.

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361 The Choroti are split up into three minor tribes which are settled in different parts of the territory occupied by these Indians. One of these sub-tribes lives on the left bank of the Pilcomayo just in latitude 22° S. and a few leagues to the north of it. Their chief at the time when I lived among them was Toula. A second sub-tribe lives about ten leagues east of them in the interior of the country. In March 1912 I undertook an expedition to these Indians. who had never before been visited by a European. Two Choroti Indians accompanied me as guides, and without them it would have been impossible to find one's way through this maze of shrublike forest land. broken here and there by small open plains. Whereas the country adjacent to the great water source Pilcomayo is fairly fertile, the soil in the interior is too dry and sandy to be suitable for cultivation. Agriculture is practised by the Choroti of the interior on a still more modest scale than by the river Indians, and since they are poor hunters their life must be extremely hard at those periods of the year when there are no wild fruits. These Choroti, like the rest, live in small communities and their total number does not exceed a few hundreds. Their chief at that time was a comparatively young man called Anempä

The third and largest Choroti tribe is found within a few leagues of Fortín Guachalla, the Bolivian military settlement mentioned before. These Indians only live on the banks of the river during the dry season. when the scarcity of water renders life in the interior impossible. The

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
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648 least with the Mataco. The Choroti also very much fear the powerful and ferocious Tobas and do not like to pass through their country.

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●114 Having finished my studies of the Choroti Indians, I left at the beginning of April for Yacuiba to prepare for my next Chaco expedition, when I proposed to visit the Tobas. Since I could not cross the river which was still swollen by the rains, I decided to return to Yacuiba through the village of Villa Montes (Mission of San Francisco), situated about thirty leagues to the north of d'Orbigny, on the bank of the Pilcomayo. From this village it is a journey of nearly three days to Yacuiba. A narrow riding-path, which in the main follows the course of the river, takes the traveller up to Villa Montes through the dense forests bordering the banks of the Pilcomayo in this region. The typical Chaco scenery disappears as one approaches the cordilleras. The village itself is situated on the very border of the Chaco, at the point where the Pilcomayo leaves the mountains.

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484 A journey like this is very difficult and even dangerous during the rainy season. In many places the primitive riding-path had been completely destroyed by the strong current of the swollen river. Every now and then large pieces of the river bank were detached and plunged into the water with a tremendous rumble, carrying with them giant trees and bushes. In such places the traveller had to cut a new path through the thickets of the virgin forest for himself and his horse, which of course was often connected with great difficulties. It is easy to understand that in this way the Pilcomayo has undergone considerable changes in the course of time. As is shown by old river-beds, the river has several times even taken another course.

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114 These regions are inhabited mainly by Toba Indians, and on my journey to Villa Montes I passed through some of their villages. Since these Tobas are comparatively easy of access, I decided to stay among them on my second Chaco expedition.

In Yacuiba I was obliged to stay for more than one month, so it was not until the middle of May that I could again leave for the Chaco. Passing through the little village of Caiza to Villa Montes, which became my head-quarters for the next six months, I settled in a Toba village about eight leagues to the south of this place, visiting later on the more distant Toba tribes. Although the Tobas have had a bad reputation — among other things these savages killed the explorer Crevaux — I was received by them in quite a friendly manner. In regard to the language, I had in the beginning the same difficulties as among the Choroti. The two

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

The classical work on the Mataco Indians, in fact almost the only work dealing with the culture of these Indians at some length, is the one published by the Italian engineer Pelleschi, *Los indios Matacos y su lengua*, a monograph forming part of the larger work by the same author *Otto mesi nel Gran Ciacco*. Firenze. 1881. Pelleschi's account of the customs and beliefs of the Mataco, however, is neither systematic nor complete. During my stay among the Mataco-Nocténes I succeeded in collecting a great many new facts especially as regards their religion, and these new facts are published in this book. I may add that — apart from a certain cultural influence exerted upon the Nocténes by their neighbours, the Toba Indians — their customs and beliefs seem to be much the same as those of the other Mataco tribes.[1]

Since the Chaco Indians, at any rate the tribes of the Pilcomayo, have many essential features in common, I shall in this book treat of their cultures in connection with one another, taking care however to point out every time whether the particular custom or idea dealt with has been found among the Tobas, the Mataco, or the Choroti.

The following works have hitherto been published by me on the customs of the Chaco Indians.

La Religion de los Indios Mataco-Nocténes de Bolivia Anales del Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Buenos Aires. Tomo XXIV, 1913.

The Couvade or Male Child-bed among the South American Indians (*Öfversigt af Finska Vetenskaps-Societetens Förhandlingar.* Bd LVII. Helsingfors, 1915.

Indian Dances in the Gran Chacó (*Öfversigt af Finska Vetenskaps-Societetens Förhandlingar.* Bd. LVII. Helsingfors, 1915.

Beiträge zur Sittengeschichte der Südamerikanischen Indianer (*Acta Academiae Aboënsis.* Humaniora. Abo, 1920).

The Toba Indians of the Bolivian Gran Chaco (*Acta Academiae Aboënsis.* Humaniora. Abo, 1923).

A great many facts concerning the Chaco Indians are also contained in my work *The Civilization of the South American Indians* (London & New York, 1926).

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[1]) As to the history of the Chaco tribes, see the important work by Ludwig Kersten, *Die Indianerstämme des Gran Chaco bis zum Ausgange des 18 Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Ethnographie Südamerikas* (*Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie* XVII. Leiden, 1905).

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12

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this they have gradually become more civilized, and in the same degree, of course, their culture has undergone changes and modifications.

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The material culture of uncivilized peoples can, at least in its essential aspects, be studied even by amateurs and travellers who stay among them only for a short time. Since this side of the culture of the Pilcomayo tribes, more particularly of the Choroti and the Ashluslay, has been described by Nordenskiöld, I need not dwell long upon it here. However — as I believe to have adequately shown in my *Civilization of the South American Indians* — the material culture of a savage people can never be properly studied isolated from its intellectual culture. The extremely superficial view Nordenskiöld takes of Indian culture in general cannot fail to show itself in his treatment of the ergology of the Indians, just as it shows itself for instance in his erroneous view of their dances and games. In the way in which the Indians manufacture and use their weapons and implements, their ornaments, the instruments connected with their religious ceremonies etc., their whole mentality finds expression, and no ethnographer disregarding the psychology of the Indians and their »superstitions» therefore is likely to give a really scientific account even of their material culture [1]). But a real insight into the mentality of an uncivilized people of course makes a prolonged stay among that people necessary.

Since the material culture of a people is always to a great extent dependent on natural conditions, it is easy to understand for instance that in dress and ornaments, in the methods of constructing the houses, in agriculture, industry, and the general mode of life a great homogeneity is to be found between the different Chaco tribes. In a subtropical land like the Chaco, where the weather is often very hot,

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[1]) It is characteristic on this point that Nordenskiöld for instance calls the drums, rattle gourds, whistles, etc. of the Pilcomayo Indians »musical instruments», entirely ignoring the fact that these objects — as also the bull-roarers, which to Nordenskiöld are simply »play-things» — have a purely magic significance. (»The Choroti and the Ashluslay possess a good many musical instruments», etc., *An Ethno-Geographical Analysis of the Material Culture of Two Indian Tribes*, 1919, p. 164). I wish to point out that these tribes do not in fact possess *a single* musical instrument since, as conceived by the Indians, the said objects have absolutely nothing to do with »music» in the sense of the word familiar to us. I should presume that the first thing an ethnographer, dealing with the material culture of a savage people, has to observe is to name their objects by their right names and not to give them names suggested by a certain similarity they may have to objects known to civilized peoples.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

RELIGION.

Chapter XII.

Belief in gods and spirits in general.

I have mentioned before that the religion of the Chaco Indians is a subject strangely neglected by all who have travelled among these natives and studied their customs. Thus, in regard to the Tobas, the naturalist Azara arrived at the conclusion that they have no religion at all, and d'Orbigny rested satisfied with stating that »their religious beliefs are very limited», whereas the Catholic missionary Cardús considered the study of these things useless. Similarly, nothing — apart from the data published by myself — has been related of the religious ideas of the Choroti and Ashluslay. Almost the only author on the Chaco Indians who gives us some information about their religion is Barbrooke Grubb, but he deals exclusively with the ideas and customs of the Lenguas of Paraguay. 114

The main reason for this deficiency of our information respecting one of the most important sides of native culture is obvious. The subject of religion, if one has a real study of it in view, requires special training and a prolonged stay among the natives, and these conditions have been lacking in the case of most »ethnographic» travellers in the Chaco, not to speak of naturalists or ordinary travellers. But even to one who devotes special attention to the spiritual aspect of Indian culture the study of such a subject as religion is beset with great difficulties, and the study can hardly ever become exhaustive. Although this may undoubtedly be said of my own contribution also, I venture to believe that in the following account at any rate the most important religious ideas and customs of the Pilcomayo Indians are mentioned.

The lowest tribes of the Pilcomayo, the Choroti, Mataco, and — as far as I have been able to ascertain — the Ashluslay, have no belief in a supreme god, nor any ideas of a creation. Beliefs of this kind are extremely 776 773

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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Chapter XIX.

Ceremonial games.

During my stay among the Choroti my attention was drawn to a curious game which was played in all villages in the month of March and evidently had some mystic meaning. The game later on turned out to be »international» in the Chaco, most tribes knowing it and playing it in somewhat different forms. The Choroti call it *syuke*, the Tobas *eoka*, the Ashluslay *syúkak*, etc., names which are evidently nothing but different corruptions of the Quichua word *chunca*, ten. Similarly the playing terms in the Chaco are as it were international and of Quichua origin, a fact which seems to support the assumption that at any rate the principal ideas underlying the game have been borrowed from the Quichua Indians.

I have only studied this game among the *Choroti* and the description I shall give of it in the following pages refers merely to the variety of the game existing among these Indians.[1])

The dice consist of four pieces of wood, which are on one side convex, on the other side quite flat. The convex side is often ornamented with certain incised figures. (See fig. 10, a.)

The player takes two dice in each hand, throws them up smoothly against each other and allows them to fall on the ground. The position taken by the dice on the ground determines the value of the cast. The points are reckoned in the following way:

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[1]) Nordenskiöld described this game in 1910 in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, but its magical or religious significance — which, of course gives it its particular interest — has entirely escaped him. This may in part be due to the fact that Nordenskiöld never saw the game played at the proper season, the beginning of the »winter», but arranged playing-parties at an other season to learn how it was played. On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that many ceremonies, which are in their character magical or religious, have been misunderstood by ethnologists and regarded as purely profane entertainments.

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hard for existence. Now the game is supposed to have the effect of *increasing the fruit and making the Indians rich*. This is made possible by virtue of the fact that *among the Indians there is always someone who wins*», from whose luck all will benefit. The Indians believe that just as they can influence the course of nature, »hurry on» the growth of the crops, by beating drums, dancing, and shaking rattles, so they believe that at this critical period they can enhance the vegetative power of the useful trees and prevent starving by playing *shuke*. It seems to me probable that in this game the magical effects are produced merely by the procedure of playing — by the feverish pace at which the game goes on, and so forth — just as technique and the very rhythm play an essential part in such magical ceremonies as dancing and the beating of drums.

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That the *shuke* game, so far as its principal features are concerned, has been borrowed by the Choroti from the mountain Indians, as has been suggested even by Nordenskiöld, is a matter beyond doubt and may be inferred from the playing terms themselves which are of Quichua origin (*shuke* = *chunca*, *tauva*, and probably *kima*). On the other hand, it is certain that the Incas never had an exactly similar game, and Nordenskiöld's imagination carries him too far when he tries to show that certain objects, found in archeological excavations on the mountain area of Ecuador, are nothing but counting-boards which have been used for a game more or less identical with the *shuke*. [1]) Nordenskiöld's curious idea of connecting the said mysterious objects with the *shuke* game of the Chaco Indians entirely loses its importance in the face of the fact that, as I have shown elsewhere [2]), the ancient Peruvian and Ecuadorian Indians had several »games of chance», none of which bore the slightest resemblance to the Chaco game just mentioned. The map published by the same ethnographer, showing the supposed distribution of »games of chance» in South America, was therefore decidedly prematurely drawn. [3]) The particular character of the Chaco game has obviously, in

[1]) See his article »Spieltische aus Peru und Ecuador», in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Heft 2 u. 3. 1918, p. 169.

[2]) See my *Ceremonial Games of the South American Indians* (*Societas Scientiarum Fennica. Commentationes humanarum litterarum*, Helsingfors, 1930).

[3]) Whereas Nordenskiöld erroneously assigns the neighbourhood of Quito in Ecuador as a region where a game like the *shuke* has been practised, he knows nothing of the games of chance I have myself discovered later in that country: the *huairu* game practised in the southern and eastern mountain regions, the *huairitu* and *singu* in vogue among the forest Indians on the rivers Bobonaza and Pastaza.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

many details, been determined by local conditions, and therefore must differ from the games customary among the ancient mountain Indians. Thus all ceremonial dice games in the Inca empire seem to have been connected with the *cult of the dead*, an idea which is wholly foreign to the Chaco Indians. Further, the Incas probably knew only of *portable* playing-boards, whereas the Chaco Indians always draw the counting-board on the ground. Moreover, the latter Indians use arrows as markers, the place where the player is »drowned», is called »river», and so forth.

The Chaco Indians, in all probability, have only borrowed the leading ideas underlying the game, together with the terminology, from their neighbours in the west, and to a certain extent invented a new game, giving these borrownings an application of their own. When the primitive Indians from the interior of the country came in contact with the comparatively civilized peoples in the west, they learned to know certain games which were said to have the marvellous effect of making the fields fruitful and filling the granaries of the Indians. We may assume that it was precisely this *practical* importance of the game that impressed the mind of the primitive Indians and induced them to invent a game similar to that customary among the Incas and to ascribe to it a similar magical efficacy. But the *shuke* was not the only game which originated in this way under the influence of the Inca civilization. Various other games, both games of chance and games of skill, seem to be in vogue in the Chaco, even among tribes so distant as the Lenguas of Paraguay, but of their possible ceremonial character nothing is known. If we may trust the ethnologists who have hitherto related the customs of the Chaco tribes, the *shuke* game is the only one to which a magical significance is ascribed.

Nor does he know the *taba* game practised by the Quichua Indians all over the Bolivian mountain area. The value of »culture maps» so arbitrarily drawn seems to me most doubtful.

[pp. 206-230 inclusive not processed for the File.]

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

Myths and Tales of the Matako Indians

(The Gran Chaco, Argentina)

by

Dr. Alfred Métraux
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PREFACE

114 I recorded the myths and tales presented here during an expedition in the Argentinian Chaco in 1933. I went there with the purpose of studying the Toba-Pilagá Indians living on the Pilcomayo, especially those around the marshy region known as Esteros Patiños. My numerous trips to the Chaco often brought me into contact with Matako Indians, who are widely spread in the Argentinian Chaco along the Bermejo and the upper stream of the Pilcomayo. At that time I had no intention of studying the Matako as I expected my investigations among the Toba to absorb all of my time. But many times, owing to the bad communications existing in the Chaco, or more frequently to the indolence of the white settlers, I was delayed at some place near a Matako encampment. To kill time I made some observations of the Matako. I made a special effort to obtain from them tales and myths because very little is known of the folklore of these Indians. The short and casual interviews with these Indians were rather productive and in relatively few days I obtained a variety of myths, tales, and legends. During the recording of this material I had frequent opportunities to ask questions about matters touched upon in the tales. The discussions sometimes provoked fresh questions and led to subjects that

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

I had not planned to investigate. I hoped that the notes I took then would be useful for a more systematic and complete study of the Matako in the future. I should never have thought of publishing these tales and documents had I not good reason to believe that there is little chance for me to return to the Chaco.[1] Even if destiny should take me again to that country, I do not know whether the same material would be available. The disappearance of the old native cultures in South America is rapid, especially among tribes of a low cultural level.

The Matako, more than any other Chaco tribe, have been exposed to the degrading influence of white colonists, but there still remain some villages, especially on the upper Pilcomayo and on the middle course of the Bermejo, where the natives live according to ancient standards. Those who had their villages along the »linea», the new railway between Formosa and Embarcación, were the most miserable wretches that I saw in South America. Generous English missionaries try with very precarious means to rescue the Indians by extending to them the protection of the Mission stations and by helping during the critical period of transition from their native culture toward a new form of life. The mission work among the Matako has proved most successful. The Indians have shown extraordinary aptitude and under the direction of the English missionaries they display remarkable talents in crafts that they ignored completely a few years ago. Their zest for instruction has always been deep and their enthusiasm must sometimes be moderated. The rapidity and ease with which the Matako adapt themselves to our modern civilization remains one of the most puzzling problems that I met with in South America. Seen in their native environment the Matako seem to be the most irreducible tribe of the Chaco. Even their physical aspect carries an impression of

[1] I was unable to check many of the ethnological data given in the notes. To make them scientifically available I have reproduced the information in the very terms of the Indians.

I am aware that the ethnological material I gathered among the Matako is too disconnected and fragmentary to be published by itself. I prefer to present it as I obtained it, as notes to the tales. We know so little about the Matako ethnology that even incomplete as these documents are they may be useful and seem to me worth publishing.

The myths and tales published here were transmitted to me by two informants, Pedro and Martin. Both spoke fairly good Spanish and had lived for many years in contact with white men or mestizoes without breaking their ties with the tribes. Of the two informants Pedro was the more deeply merged in native life. He had his hut near the little village of Las Lomitas, the station of the new railway between Formosa and Embarcación. His hut betrayed the initiative of its owner and his will to accept and adapt himself to new conditions. It was built according to the usual Argentinian pattern and very little in it denoted that the inhabitants were Indians. Despite the transformation of the old grass shack into a wooden hut, however, and the iron household wares, the life of Pedro and his family and his neighbors continued in the old pattern. One compartment of the hut was devoted to a mourning wife who observed complete seclusion. Every evening the small hamlet, from which one could see passing trains, was filled with the hoarse grunts of medicine-men. Near the modernized settlement other Indians of the same stock had built a grass village in the ancient fashion and bows and arrows were stuck into the ground ready for hunting or fishing. Pedro was a very intelligent fellow who realized the advantages of learning Spanish and of buying iron instruments from the stores, but he had not lost the sentiments of an Indian. He felt deeply the injuries inflicted upon him daily by white men. Pedro had an open mind, a great sense of dignity and justice, and a deep desire to improve his condition and that of his family. He was as friendly and kind as most Indians are when they do not assume the attitude of beaten dogs.

Martin was an entirely different personality. He was very

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[7] The ethnography of the Argentine Gran Chaco is still very little known, and will continue thus, for ever, if we do not make the effort now to study systematically the last tribes of Indians still extant but fast disappearing or being assimilated into the non-Indian population.

Our best sources for the study of the ethnography of the Chaco still are the Jesuit missionaries of the eighteenth century: Dobrizhoffer, Paucke Sanchez Labrador, Lozano and Jolis. Present day authors have studied the more directly accessible aspects of the Indian civilizations and therefore their contributions give us only a very superficial idea of Indian life as it is still lived on the Bermejo or Pilcomayo rivers. Even within the realm of material culture, open as it is to all, we are merely given catalogues of objects instead of the information which we might expect regarding economic life and techniques in the broadest sense of the word. Often the living Indians of the Chaco are treated as though they were archeological sites. It would be preferable to allow modern ethnography to take the place of archeology, rather than the other way about.

We have only a very vague idea as to the religious beliefs of those Indians. Descriptions of dances or speculations regarding animism are poor substitutes for an analysis of their beliefs and practices. As for the sociology of the Chaco, it is almost virgin ground [8] and contemporary studies dealing with it are very much below the standard of those made in the eighteenth century.

In 1939, on the occasion of my last trip to the Argentine Chaco, I had hoped to gather the necessary material on the Matacos. The state of my health kept me from doing so. For this reason I must publish the results of this trip in separate articles. In the present state of our knowledge, every new fact, if it has been precisely observed, becomes important. This consideration, together with the encouragement of my friend Doctor Fernando Márquez Miranda, prompts me to publish certain portions of my field notes. They have no other worth than that of being unpublished to date and of having been set

114 down on the field, from the reports of excellent informants. They have been obtained in San Andres and Yuto, on the Pilcomayo river, and in San Patricio, on the river Bermejo.

Birth and Infancy

842 754 The child is produced by the father's seed, which germinates, as does a plant, within the mother. Sterility is always considered by the Matacos to be the mother's fault. They explain it as being an accident brought about by some witch doctor who is using magic to prevent the sperm from getting into the woman's body. It is said that some women go to a witch doctor with the express purpose of having conception prevented. The witch doctors can, furthermore, break the enchantment, although this is considered an extraordinarily difficult thing to do.

843 A pregnant woman eats moderately so that the child will not grow too large and cause difficulty at birth. The mystical bonds between father and child find their expression in a great number of "tabus." Thus, just prior to the child's birth, the father must abstain from all work that might cause the child to be deformed. He is prohibited, in particular, from using any instrument with a cutting edge (axes, knives, hoes) in order to avoid the child's coming into the world with wounds, a harelip, for instance. The father is careful not to wear sandals or shoes, in order to ensure that the infant not have one foot larger than the other. If the father should put on a hat, the upper part of [9] the child's head will be absolutely flat. The mission [212] Indians go so far as to keep from writing, fearful that the offspring be born with a wrinkled face.

If a father to be kills only male animals on the hunt, it is a sign that the child about to be born will be a male.

Precautions of various kinds are likewise taken by the women before the child's birth. They avoid girding themselves too tightly about the waist with a belt and sleeping in a position which might lead to a difficult birth. Some women make use of drugs to make sure that no accident will overtake them. To this end they take a powder made

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

most that can be said is that the mania found a suitable climate for continuation in that atmosphere of disintegration and pessimism. It must be remembered that similar crises have been observed from the very beginning of the missionary era. It may well be, therefore, that suicide was an institutionalized form of protest under the conditions of the earlier culture undertaken for some concrete reason by one individual who could not otherwise effectively punish members of the in-group, and followed by others whose desires were kindled by the first example.

Suicides seem to have occurred with relative frequency among the Kaingang who were gathered on a reservation in the State of Sao Paulo. Since in certain cases they seem to have been caused by analogous situations to those found among the Matako, the following passage by Manizer may be of interest: "Suicides caused by family quarrels are very common. I know of several cases: Cagndiri attempted to hang herself because of some affair with her husband's brother; for that reason she was expelled from home. Vangrikuiix tried to hang herself when her husband planned to abandon her. Naxo's wife hanged herself to death because of an affair with her husband's brother, quite a young man. Old Karege's son killed himself by hanging after a quarrel with his wife who had refused to eat palmito which he had brought back from the forest. There were two other cases of suicide during the two years the Kaingang were under supervision."[1]

The cases of suicide among South American natives listed by Wisse, in his book "Selbstmord und Todesfurcht bei den Naturvolkern" (Zutphen, 1933) are based on vague references in the travel literature of the last century and as a rule are valueless for science.

[1] Les Kaingangs, 23th International Congress of Americanists, New York, 1928, p. 760-761.

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755 [114] In the course of the mission to the Argentinian Chaco of which I was in charge during 1932-1933, I had the opportunity of being present at a certain number of ceremonies for the expulsion of illnesses, or evil spirits.

[753] [774] The Matako /Mataco/ Indians do not seem to be acquainted with any other medicine than magical medicine; that is normal since the illness takes the image of the sick person and not his body.

Among the ceremonies described below, a distinction can be made between those from which the whole village benefits and those from which only a single sick person benefits.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illnesses for All the Village

(April 8, 1933).

755 756 783 796 [534] This ceremony took place in the morning in the open air rather far from the houses, and was carried out by all the medicine men /the English term is used/ of the village. They were arranged in a row facing east, and all had a maraca and a bone whistle in their hands. Some of them were carrying bands of rattles, either in the hand, slung over the shoulder, or hooked [292] over the elbows. Some officiants were dressed in red wool ceremonial shirts spangled with rings of shells, and others in war [287] shirts made of caraguata thread. Almost all were wearing red headbands decorated with feathers or hats adorned with ostrich feathers, and most had a bunch of ostrich feathers in the hand. [302] The faces of the principal medicine men were daubed with red and black, and those of the women with red. Facing the row of officiants were planted several arrows, points down, and a lance with the point up. In the course of the ceremony a bunch of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the lance. When I arrived at the spot, I noticed a young /212/ man crushing ha'tax seeds in a gourd which the medicine men would take later.

Ashluslay SK5
Mataco SI7
Choroti SK6
Tapiete SK13

/1 cont./

000 the Sociedad Cientifica del Paraguay. Having also visited
C the Churupí Indians at the mission near Lake Escalante, about
A 25 kilometers from the mission at Esteros, I continued my
M journey on September 5 as far as Linares, where I found a num-
114 ber of Mataco Indians, who in part lived in a town some seven
M kilometers from Linares and in part had come from the other
[361] side of the Pilcomayo River to Linares.

C /2/ On September 9 I left Linares and on the next day
A arrived in Guachalla, from where I visited the Churupí camp
114 /tolderia/ about seven kilometers away.
A
[361] On September 11 I left Guachalla for the fort of Cururenda,
C where I had the occasion to see the Chorote /Choroti/ Indians,
CI who were living in a camp some three kilometers from
114 Cururenda, as well as some Toba and Mataco, who came
CI from the other side of the Pilcomayo to Cururenda.
[361]

C On September 15 I continued my journey as far as Oruro,
T in the environs of which I visited the Tapieté. My escort,
114 Lieutenant Cabello, who knew these Indians well, took me to
T their two camps, one of which is 15 and the other 32 kilo-
[361] meters from Oruro.

C On September 19 I left Oruro, and passing through
114 Capirendá and Carandayty, in the company of Lieutenant
Díego Corvalan, I arrived in Machareti, where I remained
from September 21-25. Since Machareti is a Chiriguano
town, I had a good chance at this place and at the end of my
journey, to observe this interesting Indian tribe.

Beginning my return on September 25, I passed in succes-
sion through Capirendá, Carandayty, López de Filippis, and
C Puerto Casado, arriving in Asunción on October 8.
[122] Thanks to the great help of the military authorities, it was
possible for me to pass through large areas of the Paraguayan
Chaco during the relatively short time of two months, to get
acquainted with a large number of native tribes of the Chaco,
to take photographs of these tribes, and to make up vocabularies
000 of their different languages. Outside of the Toba, whom I met